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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OES-06 EB-07 DOTE-00 SAL-01 DLOS-06

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 EURE-00 /092 W
---------- 008861
P R 141416Z JUL 76
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5116
INFO COMDT USCOAST GUARD WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EFIS, PBOR, GR, US
SUBJ: SEIZURE OF GREEK FISHING VESSEL "ATLANTIKOS II"

REF : A) ATHENS 6985, B) STATE 170846, C)STATE 166435,
D) ATHENS 6706

1. DCM WAS CALLED TO FOREIGN MINISTRY JULY 13 BY AMBASSADOR TZOUNIS, DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS, FOR REVIEW OF CASE OF GREEK FISHING VESSEL "ATLANTIKOS II". TZOUNIS SAID THAT HE WAS ACTING ON INSTRUCTIONS OF FONMIN BITSION.

2. TZOUNIS EMPHASIZED THAT TO GOG KNOWLEDGE "ATLANTIKOS II" IS FIRST GREEK VESSEL TO BE SEIZED FOR VIOLATION OF U.S. FISHING LOWS. SHIPOWNERS ADMIT ILLEGAL POSSESSION ON BOARD OF SMALL QUANTITY OF LOBSTERS FOR CREW CONSUMPTION ONLY AND ARE PREPARED TO PAY $100,000 FINE. HIGHER FINE WOULD BE BEYOND MEANS OF OWNERS AND WOULD RESULT IN LOSS OF VESSEL.

3. TZOUNIS ALSO SHOWED DCM COPY OF U.S. COAST GUARD REPORT INDICATING THAT LOBSTERS SEIZED WERE COOKED AND USCG FOUND NO EVIDENCE OF UNCOOKED LOBSTERS
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EITHER IN HOLD OR PROCESSING AREAS. TZOUNIS FURTHER

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REPORTED THAT GREEK EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON HAD
ALREADY SOUGHT ASSISTANCE OF DEPT. IN SEEKING COM-
PROMISE SETTLEMENT OF "ATLANTIKOS II" CASE. WHILE
RECOGNIZING LIMITED INFLUENCE OF EMBASSY AND DEPARTMENT
IN U.S. COURT PROCEEDINGS, HE REQUESTED WHATEVER ASSISTANCE
POSSIBLE IN REACHING EARLY AND EQUITABLE SOLUTION OF
CASE.

4. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED LETTER DATED JULY 8 FROM ATLANTIKOS
SHIPPING AND FISHING CO. LTD. OUTLINING FIRM'S
INABILITY TO PAY HIGHER FINE AND LARGE OUTSTANDING
LOAN FOR VESSEL FROM GREEK AGRICULTURAL BANK. AS
REPORTED REF A, SHIPOWNER ALSO VISITED EMBASSY JULY 9
TO SEEK ASSISTANCE.

5. ESCALATION OF LEVEL OF DISCUSSION BY FONMIN
REFLECTS STRONG GOG INTEREST IN EARLY SETTLEMENT. REF
C. REPORTS THAT IN PREVIOUS SEIZURES OF
FOREIGN VESSELS FINES OVER $100,000 HAVE BEEN IMPOSED
IN CASES INVOLVING REPEAT OFFENDERS OR INTENT TO
STORE LOBSTERS FOR SUBSEQUENT SALE. GIVEN GOG INTEREST,
ACCIDENTAL AND NON-COMMERCIAL NATURE OF LOBSTER CATCH,
AND FACT THAT THIS IS APPARENTLY FIRST OFFENSE BY GREEK
VESSEL, EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE FURTHER DEPARTMENT EFFORTS
TO SECURE EARLY SETTLEMENT IN $100,000 RANGE. WE BELIEVE
THAT NEW INITIATIVE BY FONMIN INDICATES THAT SHIP-
OWNERS GENUINELY UNABLE TO RAISE LARGER SUM (REF B).

6. WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT ASSESSMENT OF
STATUS OF OUT-OF-COURT NEGOTIATIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR
EARLY AGREEMENT.
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